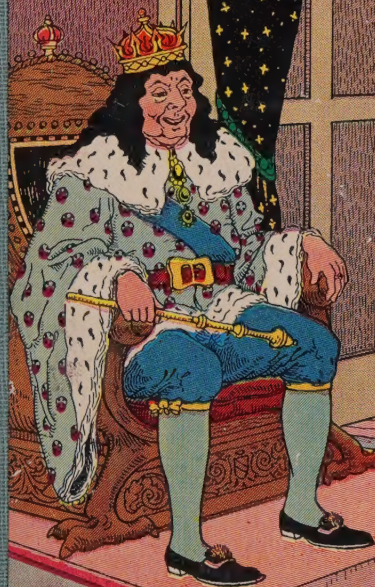



PUSS IN BOOTS

BY CLIFTON JOHNSON



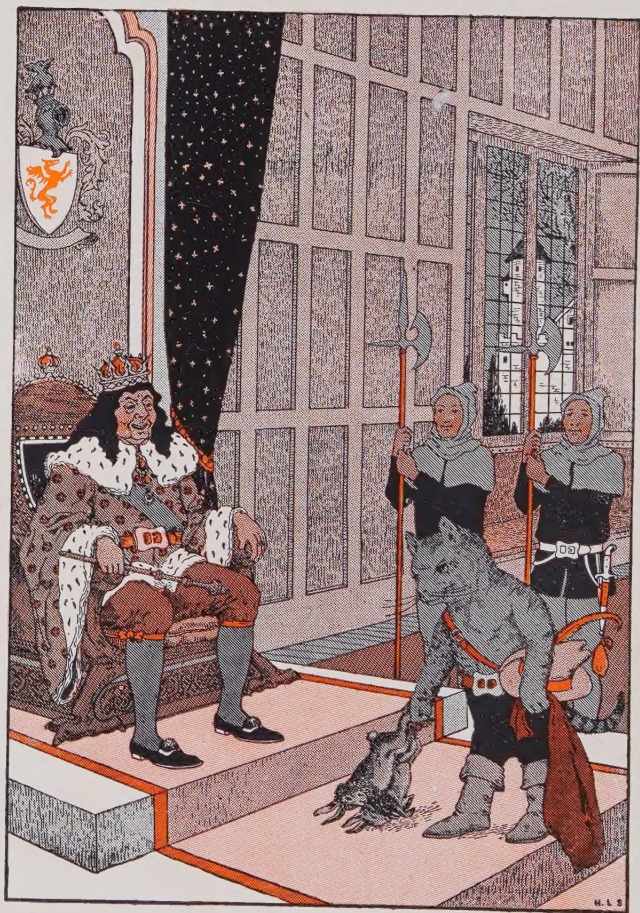






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A present of rabbits for the King
(Page 13)

BEDTIME WONDER TALES

PUSS IN BOOTS

BY

CLIFTON JOHNSON

ILLUSTRATED BY

HARRY L. SMITH

NEW YORK

CUPPLES & LEON COMPANY

PUBLISHERS

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Printed in the U. S. A.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The books in this series of Bedtime Wonder Tales are made up of favorite stories from the folklore of all nations. Such stories are particularly enjoyed by children from four to twelve years of age. As here told they are free from the savagery, distressing details, and excessive pathos which mar many of the tales in the form that they have come down to us from a barbaric past. But there has been no sacrifice of the simplicity and humor and sweetness that give them perennial charm.

The sources of the stories in this volume are as follows: Page 11, France; 28, England; 54, Japan; 65, Norway; 76, Italy; 101, Grimm; 120, China.



CONTENTS

I	PUSS IN BOOTS	11
II	A RIDE WITH THE KING	16
III	THE OGRE'S CASTLE	21
IV	BEAUTY AND THE BEAST	28
V	THE BEAST'S PALACE	33
VI	THE MAGIC MIRROR	40
VII	A BEAST NO LONGER	47
VIII	THE PHANTOM CATS	54
IX	A FOREST FIGHT	60
X	THE MAGIC HAND-MILL	65
XI	WHY THE SEA IS SALT	70
XII	A KING'S PROMISE	76
XIII	THE LITTLE OLD WOMAN	80
XIV	SPOOLIKIN	86
XV	THE WOLF MAGICIAN	93
XVI	SEVEN COMRADES	101
XVII	A RACE	108
XVIII	THE KING'S GOLD	113
XIX	THE FAMINE	120

PUSS IN BOOTS

AND OTHER FOLKLORE STORIES

I

PUSS IN BOOTS

ONCE upon a time there was a poor miller who had three sons, and when he died the only property he left for them was the mill, a donkey, and a cat. These were quickly divided without the help of either lawyer or judge. The eldest son took the mill, the second took the donkey, and there was nothing for the youngest but the cat.

He could not help feeling that he had been treated shabbily. "My brothers will be able to earn a comfortable livelihood," he sighed, "but what chance have I? Puss may feed himself by catching mice, yet he can't feed me, and I shall certainly die of hunger."

12 BEDTIME WONDER TALES

While he spoke, the cat was sitting near by and heard all he said. Immediately the creature jumped on his shoulder, rubbed gently against his cheek, and began to speak.

“Dear master, do not grieve,” he urged. “I am not as useless as you think. If you will get me a bag, and supply me with a pair of boots so I can scamper through the brush and brambles, I promise to make your fortune for you.”

The lad had very little money, but he knew Puss was a faithful creature, and he had seen him play many cunning tricks to catch rats and mice. Therefore he did not altogether despair of getting some help from him, and he bought him a smart pair of boots made of buff-colored leather and got him the bag for which he had asked.

Puss drew on the boots, and then he fitted slip-strings around the mouth of the bag, put some bran and parsley inside, and trotted off

with it to a neighboring hillside where there was an abundance of rabbits. After laying the bag on the ground with the mouth of it propped open, he hid in the ferns and bushes and waited.

Presently two foolish young rabbits came sniffing about and crept into the bag to get some of the bran and parsley. At once the clever cat drew the slip-strings close, and the rabbits were caught. Then he slung the bag over his shoulder, and away he went to the royal palace, where he asked to speak with the king.

The guards ushered him into the king's presence, and Puss made a low bow, and lifted the rabbits out of his bag. "Sir," he said, "I have been commanded by my noble lord, the Marquis of Carabas" (this was the title he chose to confer on his master) "to present these rabbits to your Majesty, with his respects."

14 BEDTIME WONDER TALES

“Tell your master that I thank him,” the king responded, “and that he has given me great pleasure.”

Then he dismissed Puss with many compliments and a purse of gold. Afterward he summoned his head cook and ordered him to serve the rabbits for dinner so he and his daughter might enjoy them.

The next day Puss went and hid in a grain field with the bag baited and open near his hiding-place. A brace of partridges ran into it, and he drew the strings and caught them. These he took home to his master. He went hunting every pleasant day and kept his master so well supplied with game that they lived in plenty.

Often he carried some game to the king. Whatever he presented at the palace was sure to be accompanied with the message, “From my lord, the Marquis of Carabas.” All the gentry at court were talking of this

strange nobleman, whom none of them had seen, yet who sent such generous gifts to his Majesty.

II

A RIDE WITH THE KING

By and by Puss decided that it was time for his master to be introduced at court. He learned that on a certain day the king and his daughter, who was the most beautiful princess in the world, were to drive in their coach along the riverside.

As quickly as possible he went to his master. "Now," he said, "your fortune shall be made without further delay, if you will follow my advice. Go and wash yourself in the river at a spot which I will show you, and leave the rest to me."

The young man knew nothing of the why or wherefore of the cat's words, but he went to the river, and Puss took charge of his clothes while he plunged into the water. He

did not enjoy the experience, for the water was cold, and he soon stopped splashing around and stood shivering with the water up to his neck, wondering what was to happen next.

Just then the king's carriage appeared in sight, and Puss promptly began to shout: "Help, help! My lord, the Marquis of Carabas is drowning!"

The king put his head out of the coach window, and he recognized Puss as the cat who had so frequently brought him presents of game. Immediately he ordered his attendants to go to the assistance of the marquis.

While they were pulling the youth out of the river the cat came up to the coach and told the king that some rogue had gone off with his master's clothes, though in fact the cunning cat had hidden them under a big flat stone.

18 BEDTIME WONDER TALES

On hearing this story the king dispatched one of his grooms to fetch a handsome suit of purple and gold from the royal wardrobe. When the young man had been arrayed in this he looked so well that no one for a moment supposed but that he was some noble foreign lord. The king and his daughter were so pleased with his appearance that they invited him into their carriage to ride with them.

At first he felt a little shy about sitting next to a princess, but she smiled at him so sweetly, and was so kind and gentle that he soon forgot his fears. As for her, after he had cast two or three respectful and somewhat tender glances in her direction, she fell in love with him to distraction.

When the cat had seen his master seated in the royal carriage, he was overjoyed to think how well his project was succeeding. He ran on ahead as fast as he could trot until

he came to a field of grain where the laborers were busy reaping.

“Reapers!” Puss said fiercely, “the king will soon pass this way. If he should ask you to whom this field belongs, remember that you are to reply, ‘To the Marquis of Carabas.’ Don’t dare to disobey me, or I will have you all chopped up as fine as mince-meat.”

The reapers were so afraid the cat would do as he threatened that they promised to obey. Puss then ran on ahead and told all the other laborers along the wayside to give the same answer, declaring that if they did not they would be terribly punished for their disobedience.

The king was in excellent humor, for the day was fine, and he found the marquis a very pleasant companion. So he told the coachman to drive slowly that he might admire the beautiful country.

20 BEDTIME WONDER TALES

“What a splendid field of wheat!” he remarked presently, and he asked the laborers to whom it belonged.

The man answered, in accord with the cat’s orders, “To our lord, the Marquis of Carabas.”

Then the coach went on until it encountered a herd of cattle. “To whom do these cattle belong?” the king asked the drovers.

“To the Marquis of Carabas,” they replied.

It was the same all along the way. The king’s inquiries as to the ownership of property received this uniform reply. The marquis listened with the greatest astonishment. But he knew very well that this was the cat’s doing. “What a wonderful creature Puss in Boots is!” he thought.

At the same time the king was thinking, “How nice it is to find that this new friend of ours is as wealthy as he is charming!”

III

THE OGRE'S CASTLE

MEANWHILE Puss, who was well in advance of the royal party, had arrived at a stately castle which belonged to a cruel ogre, the richest ever known. Indeed, he was the owner of all the land and cattle the king had admired so much. The cat knocked at the door of the castle, and a servant opened it. Then Puss asked to see the ogre and was conducted to him by the servant.

The ogre received Puss quite civilly. He had never before seen a cat in boots, and the sight amused him. The two began chatting together, and presently the cat said, "I have been assured that you possess the power to change yourself into any kind of animal you choose—a horse or an elephant, for instance."

22 BEDTIME WONDER TALES

“Well, so I can,” the ogre responded briskly.

“Dear me!” Puss exclaimed, “how much I should like to see you make such a change now.”

The ogre was only too glad to show how clever he was, and he agreed to transform himself into any animal Puss might mention.

“Oh! I will leave the choice to you,” the cat said politely.

No sooner were the words uttered than there appeared, where the ogre had been seated, an enormous lion, roaring, and lashing with his tail as if he meant to gobble up the cat in a trice.

Puss was really very much frightened, and he jumped out of a window and managed to scramble up on the roof, though not without abundance of trouble and danger because of his boots. There he clung, refusing

to come down until the ogre resumed his natural form and laughingly called to him that he would do him no harm.

Then Puss ventured back into the room and complimented the ogre on his marvelous power. In conclusion he said: "Although what you did was very amazing, it would be still more remarkable if you, who are so big and fierce, could transform yourself into some timid little creature such as a mouse. That, I suppose, would be impossible."

"Not at all," the ogre declared. "One is quite as easy to me as the other, as I will show you."

A moment later the ogre had vanished, and a little brown mouse was frisking about the floor.

"Now or never," Puss said, and with a sudden leap he seized the mouse and ate it as fast as he could.

The wicked ogre had been holding many

24 BEDTIME WONDER TALES

ladies and gentlemen in his castle under a spell. They were instantly disenchanted, and they came to express their gratitude to their deliverer. "We are ready to do anything to please you," they told him, and at his request they agreed to enter into the service of the Marquis of Carabas.

Puss now had a splendid castle with much treasure stored in its vaults, and he ordered a magnificent feast to be prepared. Then he hurried forth to the highway and met the king's coach.

His Majesty was looking toward the ogre's castle. "Whose is it?" he asked. "I have never seen a finer one."

"It belongs to the noble Marquis of Carabas," Puss replied; "and I beg you to honor my master by being his guest."

The king ordered the coachman to drive to the castle, and Puss went on ahead and threw open the gates. As the carriage was

crossing the drawbridge he cried out, "Welcome to the castle of my lord, the Marquis of Carabas!"

His Majesty turned to the marquis, and said, "Not even my own palace can surpass the beauty of your castle."

Puss helped him to alight, and conducted him to a spacious hall where a group of ladies and gentlemen were waiting to receive the new arrivals. The marquis came into the hall with the princess, and they all sat down to a splendid banquet.

Long and merrily they feasted, and when at length the guests rose to depart, the king embraced the marquis, saying: "I am greatly impressed with the castle which is your home, and with the magnificence of your hospitality. I am charmed too with your many excellent qualities, and it will be your own fault, my Lord Marquis, if you are not my son-in-law."

26 BEDTIME WONDER TALES

The marquis made several low bows, and thanked his Majesty for the honor he conferred on him. Not long afterward the miller's son married the princess, and there were rejoicings throughout the land.

On the evening of the wedding day a great ball was given, to which came princes and noblemen from near and far. Puss opened the ball, wearing for the occasion a pair of boots made of the finest leather, with gold tassels and scarlet heels. I wish you could have seen him.

When the old king died, the princess and her husband reigned in his stead. Their most honored and faithful friend at court was Puss in Boots, for his master always remembered to whom he owed all his good fortune.

Puss lived on the daintiest meat and the most delicious cream. He was petted and

made much of all the days of his life; and he never ran after rats and mice except for exercise and amusement.

IV

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

THERE was once a wealthy merchant who had six children, three of whom were sons, and the other three daughters. Although he was rich, he loved his children more than he loved his riches, and he was always trying to make them happy.

The three daughters were very handsome, but the youngest was the most attractive of all. While she was little she was called Beauty, and when she grew up people continued to call her by that name. She was as good as she was beautiful, and when not engaged with her books, of which she was very fond, she was busy doing everything she could to make her father's home pleasant for him.

The older sisters were not like Beauty. They were proud of their riches and cared little for books. It suited them best to get diversion by driving in the parks and attending balls, operas, and plays.

Presently, misfortune began to overtake the merchant in his business. Storms at sea destroyed his ships, and fire burned his warehouses.

One evening he came home and said to his family: "My riches are gone. I have nothing left that I can call my own except a little farm far off in the country. To that little farm we must all go now, and earn our daily living with our hands."

The daughters wept at the idea of leading such a different life. "We will not go!" the older two declared. "We have plenty of friends who will invite us to stay in the city."

But they were mistaken. Their friends,

30 BEDTIME WONDER TALES

who were numerous when the family was rich, now kept away.

“We are sorry for the merchant and his family, of course,” these friends said one to another. “But we have cares of our own, and we couldn’t be expected to help them. Really, if those two older girls are having their pride humbled, it is no more than they deserve. Let them go and give themselves aristocratic airs milking the cows and working in their dairy, and see how they like it.”

As soon as the merchant could settle his affairs, the family went to live on the little farm in the country. He and his sons plowed and sowed the fields, and Beauty rose at five o’clock every morning to get breakfast for them.

After the breakfast things were out of the way she busied herself about the other housework. When there was nothing else to do she would sit at her spinning-wheel, singing

as she spun, or perhaps would take a little time for reading.

The work was hard at first, yet when she became used to it she enjoyed it, and her eyes were brighter and her cheeks more rosy than ever before.

Her sisters did not change their habits so easily, and they were wretched, for they were always thinking of the wealth they had lost. They lay in bed till ten o'clock, and they did very little work after they were up. Most of their time was spent in sauntering about and complaining.

A year passed, and then the merchant received word that a ship of his, which he had believed to be lost, had come safely into port with a rich cargo. This news nearly turned the heads of the two older daughters. They fancied that now it would not be long before they could leave the little farm and return to the gay city. When their father

32 BEDTIME WONDER TALES

made ready to go to the port to attend to the unloading and sale of the ship's cargo they begged him to buy them new gowns and hats and all manner of trinkets.

"And what shall I bring you, Beauty?" the merchant asked.

"The only thing I wish for is to see you come safely home," she answered.

"I am pleased that you are so much concerned over my welfare," he said, "but that makes me want all the more to bring you a present from the city. What shall it be?"

"Well, dear father," she responded, "as you insist, I would like to have you bring me a rose, for I have not seen one since we came here."

V

THE BEAST'S PALACE

THE good merchant set out on his journey, but when he reached the port, he found that a former partner had taken charge of the ship's goods and disposed of them. The man insisted on keeping the money he had received, and the merchant was obliged to sue for it in the courts.

But though the case was decided in the merchant's favor, what he recovered barely paid the costs. So, at the end of six months of trouble and expense, he started for his little farm as poor as when he came.

He traveled day after day until he was within thirty miles of home. Then, as he was thinking of the pleasure he would have in seeing his children again, he lost his way

34 BEDTIME WONDER TALES

in a great forest through which he had to pass.

Night came on cold and rainy, and he grew faint with hunger. But presently he saw bright lights some way off shining through the trees. He turned his horse toward them, and soon came into a long avenue of great oaks. This led to a splendid palace that was lighted from top to bottom.

Yet when the merchant entered the courtyard no one met him, and when he halooed he received no answer. His horse kept on toward an open stable door. In front of the stable the merchant dismounted, then led the creature inside, and hitched it to a manger that was full of hay and oats.

Now he went to the palace and entered a large hall. There he found a good fire and a table plentifully set with food, but not a soul did he see.

While he stood by the fire drying himself

he said: "How fortunate I am to find such shelter, for I should have perished this stormy night out in the forest. But I can't imagine where the people of this palace can be. I hope its master will excuse the liberty I have taken."

He waited for some time, and the clock struck eleven. No one came, and then, weak for want of food, he sat down at the table and ate heartily. Yet all the while he was fearful that he was trespassing and might be severely dealt with for his presumption.

After he had finished eating, he felt less timid, and concluded he would look for a chamber. So he left the hall and passed through several splendid rooms till he came to one in which was a comfortable bed. There he spent the night.

On awaking the following morning he was surprised to find a new suit of clothes laid out for him on a chair by the bedside. It

36 BEDTIME WONDER TALES

was marked with his name, and had ten gold pieces in every pocket. His own clothes, which were much the worse for wear and had been wet through by the storm, had disappeared.

“Surely,” he said, “this palace belongs to some kind fairy who has seen and pitied my distress.”

In the hall where he had supped the night before he found his breakfast on the table, and after he had eaten, he went out into a great garden full of beautiful flowers and shrubbery. As he walked along he passed under a bower of roses.

“Oh!” he exclaimed, stopping, “I had no money when I left the city to buy the gifts my older daughters asked for, and my mind has been so full of my troubles that I have not thought of the rose which Beauty wanted until this moment. She shall have one of these.”

He reached up and plucked the finest one he could see. No sooner had he done this than a shaggy beast came forth suddenly from a side path where he had been hidden by a high hedge and stood before the merchant.

"This place is mine," the beast said in his deep gruff voice. "Why do you pick my flowers?"

"Forgive me, my lord," the merchant begged, dropping on his knees before the beast. "I did not know I was giving offence. It never occurred to me that any one would object to my taking a single rose where there are so many."

"Excuses are wasted on me," the beast snarled. "Thieving is thieving whether little or much is taken. You shall be punished."

"There seems to be no way to appease your wrath," the merchant responded, "and

38 BEDTIME WONDER TALES

I have nothing further to say except that I wanted the rose, not for myself, but to carry home to the youngest of my three daughters."

"You have daughters, have you?" the beast said. "Now listen. This palace is lonely. I want one of your daughters to come here and live."

"Oh, sir!" the merchant cried, "do not ask that."

"Nothing else will satisfy me," the beast declared. "I promise that no harm will be done her. Take home the rose you have picked and tell your daughters what I have said. In case no one of them will come, you must return yourself and stay for the rest of your days in the palace dungeon."

"My lord," the merchant said, "I shall not let a child of mine suffer for me. You may as well lock me up in your dungeon now as later."

“No, you go home and consult with your daughters first,” the beast ordered.

“I am in your power,” the merchant said, “and I can only obey you.”

Then he went to the stable, mounted his horse, and by night he reached home.

VI

THE MAGIC MIRROR

THE merchant's children ran out to greet him, but instead of receiving their caresses with pleasure, the tears rolled down his cheeks.

He handed the rose to Beauty, saying, "Little do you think how dear that will cost your poor father."

Then he related all the sad adventures that had befallen him. "Tomorrow I shall return to the beast," he announced in closing.

"I can't let you do that, father," Beauty declared. "I shall go in your stead."

"Not so, sister!" her three brothers exclaimed. "We will seek out the monster and either kill him or die ourselves."

“You could accomplish nothing,” their father affirmed. “The beast dwells in an enchanted palace where he has invisible helpers with whom you could not hope to contend successfully.”

“How unfortunate it all is!” the older sisters sighed. “What a pity, Beauty, that you did not do as we did and ask father for something sensible!”

“Well,” Beauty said, “who could have guessed that to ask for a rose would cause so much misery? However, the fault is plainly mine, and I shall have to suffer the consequences.”

Her father tried to dissuade her from her purpose, but she insisted. So the next morning he mounted his horse, and, with Beauty seated behind him, started for the beast’s palace.

They arrived at the long avenue of oaks late in the afternoon, and rode down it into

42 BEDTIME WONDER TALES

the silent courtyard. At the door of the stable they dismounted, and after the merchant had seen his horse comfortably housed for the night they went into the palace.

A cheerful fire was blazing in the big hall, and the table was daintily spread with the most delicious food. They sat down to this repast, but were too sad to eat much.

Just as they finished, the beast came in and addressed the merchant. "Honest man," he said, "I am glad that you could be trusted. Yesterday I was rude and threatening toward you, but that seemed to be necessary in order to get you to do what I wanted done. In the end I think you will have nothing to regret. Spend the night here, and tomorrow go your way."

"This is my daughter, Beauty," the merchant said.

The beast turned toward her and bowed. "My lady," he said, "make yourself entirely

at home here. Whenever there is anything that you want, you need only clap your hands and say the word to have it brought to you. I am very grateful for your coming, and I beg you to remember that I am not what I appear to be. But I cannot tell you what I really am, for I am under a spell. This spell I hope you will be able to remove.”

So saying, he withdrew and left the merchant and his daughter sitting by the fire. “What the beast means, I do not know,” the merchant said; “but he talks very courteously.”

They sat long in silence, and when the hour grew late each sought a chamber and retired to try to sleep.

On the morrow they found breakfast prepared for them in the hall. They soon ate what little they felt able to eat, and the merchant bade his daughter an affectionate farewell.

44 BEDTIME WONDER TALES

He went to the stable for his horse. It was all ready for him to mount, and, to his surprise, the saddlebags were full of gold. "Ah, well!" he sighed, "here is wealth once more, but it cannot make up for the loss of my dear daughter."

Beauty watched him ride away. As soon as he had passed on out of sight, she threw herself down on a cushioned window-seat and cried till she fell asleep. While she slept she dreamed that she was walking by a brook lamenting her hard fate, when a young prince, handsomer than any man she had ever seen before, came to her.

"My lady," he said, "you are not so unfortunate as you suppose. You will have your reward."

Late in the day she awoke a good deal refreshed and comforted. She concluded that she would walk about and see something of the palace in which she was to live. There

was much to admire, and she became more and more interested as she went on. Presently she came to a door on which were the words

BEAUTY'S ROOM.

She went in. It was a splendidly furnished apartment, with comfortable chairs and couches, a piano, and an abundance of books and pictures. She picked up a book that lay on the table, and this is what she found written on the fly-leaf:

“Your wishes and commands shall be obeyed. You are the queen here over everything.”

“Alas!” she thought, “my chief wish just at this moment is to see what my poor father is about.”

While she was thinking this she perceived some movement in a mirror on the wall in front of her. She went to the mirror to get

46 BEDTIME WONDER TALES

a closer view, and there she saw her father arriving home, and her sisters and brothers meeting him. The vision faded quickly away, but Beauty felt very thankful that she had been allowed such a pleasure.

“This beast shows a great deal of kindness,” she said, glancing about the attractive room. “He must be a far better creature than we have imagined.”

VII

A BEAST NO LONGER

BEAUTY did not see the beast until evening. Then he came and asked if he might sup with her.

She replied that he could. But she would much rather have eaten alone, for she could not help trembling in his presence.

As long as they sat at the table, soft beautiful music was played, though whence it came, or who were the musicians she could not discover.

The beast talked to her with great politeness and intelligence, yet his gruff voice startled her every time he spoke. When they had nearly finished eating, he said, "I suppose you think my appearance extremely ugly."

48 BEDTIME WONDER TALES

"Yes," Beauty acknowledged, "that is what I think, but I also think you are very good."

"Thank you," the beast said. "You show a most gracious spirit in not judging me wholly by my uncouth exterior. I will do anything I can to make you happy here."

"You are very kind, Beast," she told him. "Indeed, when I think of your good heart, you no longer seem to me so ugly."

As they rose from the supper table the beast asked, "Beauty, do you think you could ever care enough for me to kiss me?"

She faltered out, "No, Beast," and he turned and left the room sighing so deeply that she pitied him.

In the following days and weeks Beauty saw no one except the beast. Yet there were invisible servants who did everything possible for her comfort and pleasure.

She and the beast always had supper to-

gether, and his conversation never failed to be entertaining and agreeable. By degrees she became accustomed to his shaggy ugliness and learned to mind it less, and to think more of his many amiable qualities. The only thing that pained her was that when about to leave her at the end of supper he was sure to ask if she thought she could some time care enough for him to kiss him.

Three months passed, and one day, when Beauty looked in her mirror, she saw a double wedding at her father's cottage. Her sisters were being married to two gentlemen of the region. Not long afterward the mirror showed that her three brothers had enlisted for soldiers, and the father was left alone.

A few days more elapsed, and Beauty saw that her father was sick. The sight made her weep, and in the evening she told the beast what the mirror had revealed to her.

50 BEDTIME WONDER TALES

“Now that my father is unwell I wish I could go and nurse him,” she said.

“Will you return at the end of a week if you go?” the beast asked.

“Yes,” she replied.

“I cannot refuse anything you desire,” the beast said. “A swift horse will be ready for you at sunrise.”

Early the next day Beauty found the swift horse saddled for her in the courtyard, and away she went like the wind through the forest toward her father's cottage. When she arrived, the old merchant was so overjoyed at seeing her that his sickness quickly left him, and the two spent a very happy week together.

As soon as the seven days were past she returned to the palace of the beast. She reached it late in the afternoon. Supper time came, and the food was served as usual, but the beast was absent.

Beauty was a good deal alarmed. "Oh! I hope nothing has happened to him," she said—"he is so good and considerate."

After waiting a short time she went to look for him. She hurried through all the apartments of the palace, but the beast was not in any of them. Then she ran out in the twilight to the garden, and there, by the borders of a fountain, she found the beast lying as if dead.

"Dear, dear Beast," she cried, kneeling beside him, "what has happened?" And she bent down and kissed his hairy cheek.

At once a change came over the beast, and on the grass beside the fountain lay a handsome prince. He opened his eyes, and said feebly: "My lady, I thank you. A wicked magician had condemned me to assume the form of an ugly beast until some beautiful maiden consented to kiss me. I think you are the only maiden in the world kind-

hearted enough to have had affection for me in the uncouth form the magician gave me.”

“But why are you lying here, and why are you so weak?” Beauty inquired anxiously.

“When you went away to your father,” he said, “I was so lonely I could neither eat nor amuse myself. I lost strength, and to-day, while walking here in the garden, I fell and could not rise.”

Then Beauty filled a cup with water from the fountain and lifted him up so that he could drink. The water revived him somewhat, and with her aid he rose to his feet. “Call for help,” the prince said.

She called, and several men came promptly and carried the prince indoors. The servants were no longer invisible, for the enchantment had been removed from them as well as from their master.

Warmth, food, and happiness went far toward restoring the prince, and he was up and

about the next morning. Without further delay he sent for Beauty's father to come and make his home with them.

Not long afterward Beauty and the prince were married, and they lived with great joy and contentment in their palace for the rest of their days.

VIII

THE PHANTOM CATS

A RUINED temple stood in a lonely forest. Huge trees waved their branches above it, the leaves in the thickets whispered around it, and it was so hidden that no one would suspect it was there until he was close to it.

One day a brave young soldier who was seeking his fortune in the wide, wide world came to the temple. He had lost his way in the forest, and as he wandered here and there seeking a path, he chanced to see the ruined building in a little clear space among the trees.

Night was at hand, and a palace could not have seemed more welcome to the young warrior. "Here is all I want," he said. "This temple still has some of its arches in

place. If the weather takes a turn for the worse they will afford me a shelter from the storm, and, whatever the weather, I can lie down comfortably to sleep and dream of glory and adventure. What more could be desired?"

He entered the building and selected a nook to his liking. Then he wrapped himself in his mantle, stretched himself on the floor, and soon fell asleep. But his slumber did not last long. His pleasant dreams were disturbed by horrid sounds. He woke, sprang to his feet, and cautiously peered out of the temple door.

The moon was shining, and there he saw in the weird light, a troop of monstrous cats marching across the clear space in front of the temple, and dancing a wild dance. As they danced they uttered horrid yowls and wicked laughs; and through these sounds he could hear the words of a strange chant:

“Whisper not to Shippetaro
That the Phantom Cats are near,
Whisper not to Shippetaro
Lest our enemy appear.”

The soldier crouched low at the door; for, brave as he was, there was something so dreadful in the appearance of the creatures that he did not want them to see him. Soon, however, the cats, with a wild chorus of yells, disappeared as quickly as they had come.

Then the soldier lay down and slept again, nor did he waken until the sun peered into the temple and whispered to him that day had come.

By the morning light it was easy to find a path which the evening shadows had hidden from him. He was very hungry, and he started at once to seek some dwelling. After following the path for a short time he came out of the forest and saw a little hamlet surrounded by green fields.



"Dear, dear beast, what has happened?"



“How fortunate I am!” he cried joyfully. “Here are houses. So there must be people, and people must have something to eat. If they are kind they will share with me, for I am almost famished.”

He hurried to the nearest cottage, but as he approached he heard sounds of bitter weeping. He went to the door and was met by a nice young girl whose eyes were red with crying. She greeted him courteously, and he asked her for food.

“Enter and welcome,” she said. “My parents are about to be served with breakfast. You shall join them, for no one must pass our door hungry.”

The young warrior went in, sat down with the parents, and ate breakfast. When he finished eating he rose to go.

“Thank you very much for so good a meal,” he said.

“You have been welcome,” the man

of the house responded. "Go in peace."

"And may happiness be yours," the young soldier said.

"Happiness can never be ours again," the man declared with a sad face.

Just then his daughter and wife went into the next room and the soldier could hear sounds as if the mother were trying to comfort the girl.

"Are you in trouble?" he asked his host.

"Terrible trouble," the man replied, "and there is no help for it. I would have you know that in the near by forest is a ruined temple. This shrine, once the dwelling of holy men, is now the abode of evil spirits. Each year a forest demon, whom none of our people has ever seen, demands of the village a victim, and this victim must be the village's fairest maiden. If we were to refuse to comply with the demon's orders he would destroy all our homes.

“The maiden is placed in a cage and carried to the temple just at sunset. There she is left, and no one knows what is her fate, for in the morning not a trace of her remains. This year, alas! it is my daughter who is to be sacrificed, and tonight is the appointed time.”

As he finished speaking, the man buried his face in his hands and groaned.

IX

A FOREST FIGHT

“WHAT you tell me is terrible indeed,” the young warrior said to his host, “but do not despair. I will try to find a way to save your daughter.”

He paused to think. “Do you know who Shippetaro is?” he asked suddenly, as he remembered the scene of the night before.

“Shippetaro is a beautiful big dog owned by Lord Monofer whose castle is in the next village,” the man answered, wondering at the question.

“Very good!” the soldier cried. “Keep your daughter at home and do not allow her out of your sight. Trust me, and the demon shall never harm her.”

He hurried off to the castle of Lord Mono-

fer and begged that Shippetaro be lent to him for just one night.

“You shall have the dog on one condition,” the lord said, “which is that you promise to bring him back to me tomorrow safe and sound.”

“I promise,” the young warrior responded.

He took Shippetaro with him back to the home of the maiden; and when evening came he placed the dog in the cage which she was to have occupied.

“Take him to the ruined temple,” he said to the bearers.

They obeyed, and he went with them. When they reached the temple the bearers placed the cage on the ground near the entrance and ran away to the village as fast as their legs could carry them.

The young warrior laughed softly at their fright as he hid himself in the temple.

62 BEDTIME WONDER TALES

Everything was so quiet that he could scarcely keep awake. But he was soon aroused by the same mysterious chant he had heard the evening before. He peeped out and saw the troop of phantom cats coming through the darkness, led by the largest and fiercest looking Tom-cat he had ever seen. As they came, they chanted with unearthly screeches,

“Whisper not to Shippetaro
That the Phantom Cats are near,
Whisper not to Shippetaro
Lest our enemy appear.”

The song was scarcely ended when the great Tom-cat caught sight of the cage and sprang on it with a savage yowl. One sweep of his paw tore open the lid, but instead of the dainty morsel he had expected, out leaped Shippetaro.

The big dog sprang on the beast and shook him as the cat might have shaken a rat, while the other beasts stood still in amazement.

Now the young warrior drew his sword, dashed to Shippetaro's aid, and used his weapon to such good purpose that by the time the dog had killed the Tom-cat the rest of the phantom cats were no more.

Then he turned to Shippetaro, saying: "Brave dog! you have delivered from misery a whole village by your courage. Let us return that you may receive the honor which is your due."

He patted the dog on the head, and led him back to the village. There the maiden anxiously awaited his return. Great was her joy when she heard of her deliverance.

"Oh, sir!" she cried, "I can never thank you enough. I am the only child of my par-

64 BEDTIME WONDER TALES

ents, and no one would have been left to take care of them if I had gone to be the monster's victim."

"Do not thank me," the young warrior said. "But all the village owe thanks to Shippetaro. It was he who destroyed the demon leader of the phantom cats."

X

THE MAGIC HAND-MILL

ONCE upon a time there was a poor man and his wife, who, when Christmas Eve came, had not a morsel of food in their cottage. So the man went forth to beg something to eat.

First he visited the home of a rich farmer and asked for a little of this farmer's abundance. But the farmer said, "You'll get nothing here," and shut the door in his face.

The next house beyond the farmer's was a big old mansion that was said to be haunted. Nothing had been done to keep it in repair for a long time. The roof was leaky, many of the windows were broken, and the brush had grown up around it. The house had been dark and silent whenever the

poor man had seen it at night before. But this Christmas Eve it was brightly lighted and he could hear sounds of revelry.

The man went to the door and rapped. A demon with hoofs and horns opened it and asked what he wanted.

"I want food, if you would be so kind as to give me some," the man replied; but as he looked at the demon and many others of his kind, big and little, in the room he heartily wished himself somewhere else.

"The food that we have is prepared for a feast of our own," the demon said; "but we will give you a hand-mill if you care for it. You only need to tell it what you want and it will grind out anything you ask for. We have no further use for it and we were going to throw it down in the well."

"It is the very thing I need," the poor man responded, "and I thank you for your gift."

The demon handed him the mill and told

what words to say to stop it. Unless these words were spoken it would keep on forever grinding the thing it had been asked to grind.

When the poor man reached home his wife was not at all pleased to see him come in the door with nothing but an old hand-mill.

“Here I’ve been sitting waiting for you to bring food, and instead you fetch that thing,” she grumbled. “What good will it do us? We have no grain to grind in it. Our shelves are bare of food, and the porridge pot hangs empty from the crane without even two sticks to lay across each other under it to cook the porridge if we had some to cook.”

“All that will soon be remedied,” the man informed her as he set the mill on the table.

Then he asked it to grind wood for the fire. When he had enough of that he bade it grind a table-cloth, and next meat and all

the other things that were good for a Christmas Eve supper.

"Bless me!" his wife exclaimed as she watched it grind, "where did you get such a wonderful mill?"

"Never mind where I got it," he replied. "You can see that it is a good one, and that we are not likely to go hungry in future."

Three days later the man invited his friends to a feast at his home. The rich farmer happened to be passing when the feast was in progress, and he looked in. The plentiful food and its variety and excellence amazed him.

He said to himself: "On Christmas Eve the fellow was so poor that he came to me begging for a trifle to eat. Now he gives a feast that is better than I could give myself."

"Hello, friend!" he called, "tell me where you got your wealth."

“Do you see that hand-mill in the corner?” the other responded. “I owe my good fortune to that. It is a magic mill that will grind out anything a person asks of it.”

“Such a mill would be more fitting for me to have than you,” the rich man declared. “I will buy it of you.”

He insisted, and after a great deal of persuasion bought it for one hundred dollars, but had to agree that it should not be delivered to him until haymaking time. The cottager was confident that meanwhile he would be able to grind out enough to keep him in comfort for many a year. You may be sure that he did not let the mill grow rusty in those months.

XI

WHY THE SEA IS SALT

WHEN hay-harvest came, the cottager delivered the hand-mill to the rich farmer, but did not tell him how to stop it. After the cottager had gone home, the farmer sent all his family and servants to the hayfield, saying he would attend to the house himself that day.

Toward noon he set the mill on the kitchen table and said, "Grind herrings and milk pottage for dinner, and do it quickly and well."

So the mill began to grind herrings and milk pottage. Soon the dinner dishes were filled, and the farmer ordered the mill to stop. But he did not know the right words

to say, and it kept on grinding. He hurriedly got pans and tubs, and it filled those. Then the fishes and pottage came out over the kitchen floor.

The farmer tried to stop the mill by main strength, but could not; and he tried without avail to take it apart. In a short time the pottage rose so high that the man was like to be drowned. He escaped by opening the door into the parlor. That room also rapidly filled while he was standing in it uncertain what to do. Finally, with difficulty and danger, he forced his way through the pottage and got the front door open.

He stumbled out, and the pottage came after him, streaming over the farmyard and garden.

The farmer's wife had begun to think it was dinner time, and she said to the hay-makers: "Though the master has not called us, we may as well go home now. It

72 BEDTIME WONDER TALES

may be that he finds he is not good at making pottage and needs my help.”

So they began to straggle toward the farmhouse, which stood above them near the crest of a gentle hill. They had gone only a little way when they saw the herrings and pottage flowing toward them, and the farmer running ahead of the deluge as if mischief were at his heels.

“Would to heaven that each of you had a hundred stomachs!” he called to them. “Take care that you are not overwhelmed by this villainous pottage!”

He ran on straight to the home of the cottager, and begged him to take the mill back. “In another hour my whole farm will be destroyed by the herrings and pottage I set it grinding for dinner!” he exclaimed.

“I will take back the mill and stop its devastating only on condition that you pay me a hundred dollars,” the cottager said.



The mill will not stop grinding salt

So the farmer paid the hundred dollars, and the cottager went as near the farmhouse as he could get and shouted the words that were needed to stop the mill. The flow of pottage ceased, and later the man carried the mill to his home.

Presently he set the mill to grinding money and built a splendid mansion with a gilded roof. The mansion was near the ocean, and the roof glittered far out to sea. Many vessels that were sailing past stopped, and the people on board came ashore to visit the mansion and see the wonderful mill. People journeying by land also visited the mansion and the mill became famous.

At length a skipper called who asked if it could make salt.

"Yes, it can make salt," its owner replied.

When the skipper heard that, he wished very much to have the mill, cost what it

74 BEDTIME WONDER TALES

might. "If I had it," he thought, "there would be no need of my sailing away over the perilous sea for freights of salt."

At first the owner would not hear of parting with it, but the skipper begged and increased his offers till at last he obtained it by the payment of many thousand dollars. So afraid was he that the seller might change his mind that he got the mill on board ship as hastily as possible, and had no time to ask how to stop its grinding.

When he had gone a little way out to sea, he set the mill in the middle of the deck, and said, "Grind salt, and grind it both quickly and well."

So the mill began to grind salt. The salt poured out in a volume that pleased the skipper greatly, and in no very long time the ship was filled. Then he wanted to stop the mill, but nothing he could do or say had any effect. It went on grinding, and the salt

heaped higher and higher till the ship sank.

There lies the mill at the bottom of the sea to this day, still grinding, and that is why the sea is salt.

XII

A KING'S PROMISE

ONCE upon a time there was a queen who went out to walk around in front of the royal palace and warm herself in the sun. A little old woman came along presently and said, "Please give me something for charity, fair lady."

The queen, to save herself the trouble of taking her hands out of her muff, responded, "I have nothing to give you."

The little old woman hobbled away grumbling.

"What was she muttering?" the queen asked her attendants.

"She said that one day or another your Majesty would need her aid," they replied.

The queen bade one of the pages run after

her to call her back, but the little old woman had turned the corner and disappeared.

Eight days later a stranger presented himself at the palace and asked to speak to the king in private. His request was granted, and he said: "Your Majesty and the queen are childless, which I know you both have long regretted. Now I wish to make a bargain with you. In my hand you see this little phial, the contents of which the queen must drink, and she shall have a child. If the child is a boy you can keep him. If the child should be a girl, as soon as she is nine years old you must bring her to the top of yonder mountain and leave her there. You will never hear of her again."

The king hesitated to agree to such terms, but he finally accepted the conditions, and the stranger gave him the little phial. The queen drank its contents at the king's request, but he did not tell her of his bargain.

78 BEDTIME WONDER TALES

Within a year a little girl was born to them, and she grew up more beautiful than the sunlight. The king and the queen quite worshiped her. When she entered her ninth year the poor father had no more peace of mind, thinking that he would soon have to carry her to the mountain top and there abandon her, never to hear of her any more.

The day the princess completed her ninth year the king said to the queen, "I am going to the country with the child and shall be back toward evening."

They set out together and walked till they began to ascend the mountain. The princess soon got tired of climbing, and the king took her in his arms and carried her.

"Papa, what are you going to do up there?" she asked. "Let us go back."

The king did not reply and with difficulty kept his tears from flowing.

When they reached the summit of the

mountain he said, "Sit here, darling, and wait a little while."

There he left her to her fate and went home. As soon as the queen saw him arrive alone, she began crying out: "Where is our child? What have you done with our little daughter?"

He would have liked to avoid telling her the real facts, but she insisted on knowing the whole truth. When she had heard all he had to say she rushed off like a crazy woman in quest of the child. She searched about on the mountain top and called to her for three days and three nights, without finding a trace of the girl. So at last she returned disconsolate to the palace.

XIII

THE LITTLE OLD WOMAN

NINE long years had nearly passed away when the queen happened to look over the parapet of a small terrace in front of the palace, and whom should she see down in the street below but the little old woman, the very same who had asked alms of her on that far gone winter day.

“Good woman, good woman!” the queen cried, “come up here.”

“I am in a great hurry now,” the other said. “I shall be back tomorrow.”

The queen felt rather put out by this response. The next day she spent all her time on the terrace watching till she saw the little old woman passing. “Good woman,

good woman!" she called, "will you please come up here?"

"I am in great haste today," was the reply, "but I shall be back again tomorrow."

The following day, the queen, to make sure of her, went down the palace steps and waited close to the sidewalk. When the little old woman came along and was again accosted by the queen, she said, "Your Majesty, I am in a greater hurry than ever."

She would have gone on, but the queen caught hold of her arm and refused to let her go. There on the steps the queen humbly begged the old woman's pardon for not giving her alms. Then she said, "Ah! good woman, help me find my child."

"But what can I know about her?" the other responded. "I am only a poor little old woman."

"You must help me," the queen insisted.

"Then it is bad news I must give your

82 BEDTIME WONDER TALES

Majesty," the little old woman said, "The princess has fallen into the power of a wolf magician. It was he who came to the king with the phial and made the bargain. In a month's time he will ask her if she wants him for her husband. If she answers, 'No,' he will devour her in two mouthfuls. You must give her warning in time."

"And where does the wolf magician live?" the queen questioned.

"He lives underground," the old woman replied. "To get there we will have to go down and down for three days and three nights without eating, drinking, or resting. We will take with us nothing except a little knife, a ball of thread, and a handful of barley. Get those and come with me."

The queen got the knife, the thread, and the barley, and they set out together. Presently they reached a hole in the earth

through which they could barely pass. There the little old woman paused to fasten one end of the ball of thread to a small bush. Then in they went and down, down, down, carrying the ball of thread and letting it unwind. At last the queen felt as if her knees were breaking under her.

“My little old woman, let us rest awhile,” she said.

“That is quite impossible, your Majesty, if you would save your daughter,” was the response.

So they continued to go down till the queen thought she could go no farther for hunger. “Little old woman, let us eat a mouthful,” she said.

“That is quite impossible, your Majesty, if you would save your daughter,” the other declared.

They kept on going down and the queen’s

throat was parched with thirst. "Little old woman," she said, "I see a pool in the rocks beside us. Pray stop a moment that we may drink."

"That is quite impossible if you would save your daughter," the other responded.

At last they came out on a vast plain. The ball of thread was now unwound to its other end, and the old woman tied this to a small shrub.

Afterward they advanced into the plain, and at every step the queen dropped a grain of barley, which at once took root and sprouted.

As soon as all the seed had been dropped the little old woman said: "Now your Majesty must stick the little knife into the ground, and cough three times. We are at our journey's end."

So the queen stuck the little knife into the

THE LITTLE OLD WOMAN 85

ground and coughed three times. Then the old woman said,

“Little knife, little knife so stout,
Stay where you are till I pull you out.”

XIV

SPOOLIKIN

AFTER the king left the princess on the mountain top he had not been gone long when she began to cry and scream in terror. But at last she cried herself to sleep.

She awoke in a big strange palace, and went wandering about to find some one who could tell her where she was. Yet in all the splendid rooms and halls she found not one living soul.

She was feeling tired of walking and searching when the chairs spoke, "Sit down, princess, sit down," they said.

After seating herself it occurred to her that she was hungry, and lo! a table appeared, all ready laid, with smoking-hot food on it.

"Eat, my princess, eat," the table said.

She ate and drank heartily, and soon afterward began to feel drowsy. Then a near by couch spoke, saying, "Sleep, my princess, sleep."

Think how astounded she was to hear the furniture talk! But she lay down and fell asleep.

Thus things went every day. She wanted for nothing, but she wearied terribly of staying there all alone without ever seeing a human face. Often she wept, thinking of her good father and mother. Once she called for them quite loud, "Dear papa, dear mamma! why do you leave me here?"

But a great rough voice snarled: "Be quiet there! Silence!"

She shrank into a corner, and did not venture to call her father and mother again.

One fine day, after a whole year had passed, she heard a voice asking, "Would you like to see me?"

88 BEDTIME WONDER TALES

It was not the gruff voice that had frightened her before, but a small piping voice; and she replied: "Why, certainly, I would be very glad to see you."

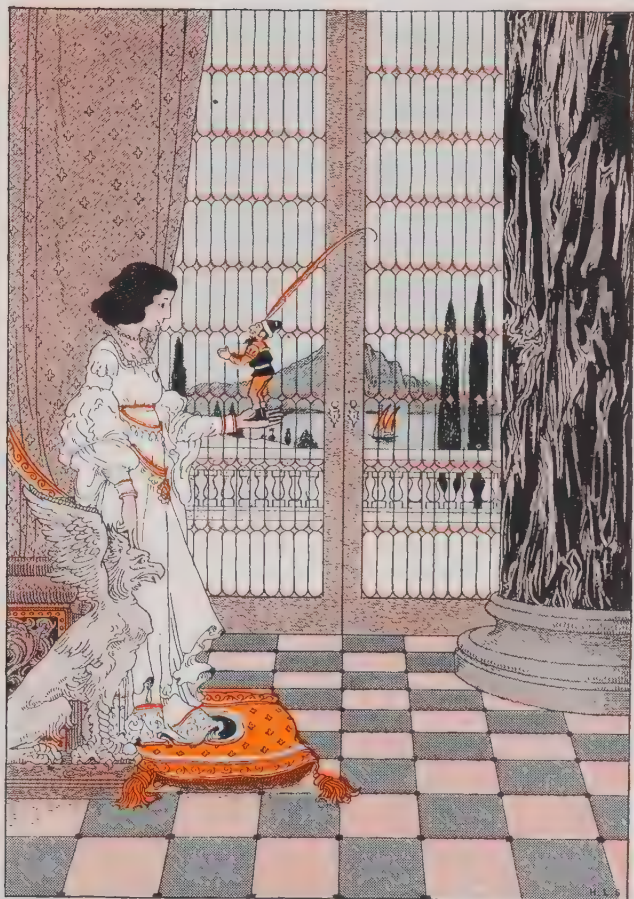
At once the door of the room opened, and there came forward a tiny little man, only a foot high, all dressed in cloth of gold, and wearing on his head a red velvet cap, from which rose a magnificent white feather taller than himself.

"Good-day, princess," he said.

"Good-day," she responded. "Oh, you dear little fellow, how pretty you are!" And she caught him up in her arms and began kissing and petting him, and jumping him up in the air as if he had been a doll.

"Will you have me for your husband? Do you want to have me?" the little creature asked.

The princess laughed and answered: "Yes, I want you! I want you!" And she



The Princess and the little man

tossed him up in the air and caught him as he came down. "What's your name, little thing?"

"Spoolikin," he replied.

"What are you doing in this palace?" she inquired.

"I am the master here," he told her.

"Ah, then, let me go! Let me go to my own home!" she begged.

"No, no!" he objected, "we are to be married."

"You'd better think of growing for the present, my little man," she said.

Spoolikin was much offended. He went away and did not show himself again for a whole year. Meanwhile the princess was so lonely that she called out every day, "Spoolikin, Spoolikin!" But no Spoolikin responded.

However, when the year ended, his voice asked, "Would you like to see me?"

90 BEDTIME WONDER TALES

“Surely I would,” the princess replied; and she added to herself, “He must have grown some in a year’s time.”

But when the door opened the same tiny creature appeared before her, and he wore the same suit of cloth of gold and the same red velvet cap with the fine white feather taller than himself.

“Good-day, princess,” was his greeting.

“Good-day, Spoolikin,” she said.

The princess was surprised to find him unchanged, not one bit grown. She caught him up in her arms and kissed and caressed him, and tossed him up in the air like a doll.

“Will you have me for your husband?” the little fellow asked. “Will you have me?”

The princess laughed outright. “Yes, I’ll have you,” she replied, “but you must grow bigger first.”

Then she made him turn a somersault in the air and caught him in her hands.

Spoolikin was greatly offended at this and went away.

The same thing happened regularly every year until nine years had almost passed away. In the meantime the princess had grown up to be a lovely young woman.

One night she was thinking of her father and mother and could not sleep. "I wonder if they still remember me," she murmured. "They may think I am dead."

She was weeping on her pillow when she heard little pebbles striking against the shutters of her window. Who could be throwing them at that hour?

She gathered up courage, left her bed, opened the shutters very gently, and asked in a whisper: "Who is there? What do you want?"

92 BEDTIME WONDER TALES

“The queen, your mother, is here, and a kind little old woman who has guided her,” was the reply. “We are come on your account.”

The princess was ready to jump out of the window in her joy, but the queen said: “Listen, my child, you must stay where you are for the present. That Spoolikin is a wolf. He appeared to you in the form of a little man so as not to frighten you. But now that you are grown up he will show himself in his true shape. Do not be alarmed, however. He will ask you to be his husband, and you must answer, ‘Yes,’ or he will eat you in two mouthfuls. Tomorrow night, at this same hour, we will meet here again.”

XV

THE WOLF MAGICIAN

IN the morning the wolf, instead of Spool-ikin, came to the room of the princess. Her door opened, and in walked the great, gaunt, hairy monster with fearful eyes and savage teeth. At sight of him the princess was ready to faint.

“Will you have me for your husband?” the brute roared.

The princess trembled like a leaf. She intended to answer, “Yes,” but in her fear and confusion she cried out, “Oh, no, no!”

“Then I will eat you!” the wolf howled, and he pounced on her with his terrible claws.

“Wait, I beseech you till tomorrow,” the princess begged.

94 BEDTIME WONDER TALES

The wolf paused a moment uncertain. Then he grumbled: "I grant your desire. You shall live till tomorrow."

That night, at the hour agreed on, the princess looked out of her window and said in an undertone, "Oh, my own mamma dear! I told the wolf 'No' without intending to do so, and tomorrow I am to be eaten."

"Have courage," the little old woman said, and went to the palace gate where she knocked loudly with her cane.

"Who is there and what do you want?" the wolf roared in a mighty voice that made the building shake:

She replied:

"I am Little Knife
That is thrust into the ground
To defend the child you found."

The wolf could do nothing against this charm. He came out at dawn the next

morning, and when he saw the little knife stuck in the ground he gnawed his paws in rage. "If I find the person who put that here," he said, "I'll bite that person's head off."

He searched all over the place without success. Then he called to the princess: "Come here! Pull this little knife out of the ground, and I promise not to eat you."

The princess believed him and drew out the little knife.

"Now I'll make an end of you in two mouthfuls," the treacherous wolf said; and he seized her with his great claws and was going to gobble her up.

"Wait, I beseech you, till tomorrow," the princess begged.

The wolf reflected a moment, and then responded, "I grant you one more day."

That night the princess again looked out of her window and saw the queen and the

little old woman down below. "Oh, my own dear mamma!" she cried softly, "what shall I do? The wolf told me to pull a little knife out of the ground for him. I did so, and he says he will eat me tomorrow."

"Have courage," the little old woman told her, and went to the palace gate, where she knocked louder than before.

"Who is there, and what do you want?" the wolf roared, and the palace shook with the thunder of his voice.

She replied:

"I am Barley-Grain

That is planted in the ground

To defend the child you found."

The wolf could do nothing against this charm. He came out at dawn in the morning and saw the barley. Every seed the queen had dropped had grown to maturity and the tops were all hanging down with

ripe ears. The wolf gnawed his paws in rage, and said, "If I find the person who sowed this seed I'll bite that person's head off."

He searched all over the place without success. Then he called to the princess: "Come here! Reap this barley, and I promise not to eat you."

The princess again believed him, which was very foolish of her, I think, and set to work. When she finished reaping, the wolf said, "Now I'll make an end of you in two mouthfuls."

"Wait, I beseech you, till tomorrow," the princess sobbed.

After pausing a moment to consider, he said, "Well, I grant your desire, but it is for the last time."

When night came, the unfortunate princess looked out of her window and had another conference with her friends. "Oh, my

own dear mamma!" she said, "the wolf ordered me to reap some barley for him. I did so, and he says he will eat me tomorrow."

"Have courage," the little old woman told her, and went to the palace gate where she knocked louder than ever.

"Who is there?" the wolf roared.

She replied:

"I am fine Wool Thread,
That to a bush is bound
To defend the child you found."

The wolf could do nothing against this charm. He came out at dawn, and as soon as he saw the thread tied to the little bush he bit his paws in rage. "Come here!" he called to the princess. "Untie this thread for me and I promise not to eat you."

But this time the old woman had taught the princess what to do. She was to untie

the thread from the underground bush, and, instead of letting the wolf have it, was to keep it in her own hands and wind it up, walking straight on, never once stopping to eat, drink, or rest.

She untied the thread, and the wolf told her to give it to him, but she would not. He followed her into the passage. "You must be hungry," he said. "Eat a mouthful."

"Not now," she responded.

On and on she went with the wolf close behind. "You must be thirsty," he said. "Drink a little water."

But she would not. At last they came out of the hole, and there stood the maiden's mother. With her was a most beautiful lady, lovely as the morning star. This was the Queen of the Fairies whom they had known hitherto as the little old woman.

At sight of her the wolf got as white in

100 BEDTIME WONDER TALES

the face as bleached linen. "Oh, my arch enemy!" he faltered. "I am lost."

Then the Queen of the Fairies took stones and piled them up so that the entrance to the hole was filled. That done, she disappeared before her companions could even thank her.

The horrid wolf was down in the hole and he never got out to trouble people any more. Without delay, the princess and her mother went home to the royal palace, and a year later the princess married the King of Portugal.

XVI

SEVEN COMRADES

ONCE there was a well-to-do man who, as ill-luck would have it, had a son so idle and so stupid that he could not tell a bean pod from a cucumber. When the father was unable longer to put up with the youth's folly he got him to join the army.

Afterward the son was a soldier in the wars for many years, and he became brave and bold, but when the wars ended he was sent about his business with only three farthings to show for all the time he had spent fighting in the army of his king.

“This is mean treatment,” he said, “and I am not going to stand it. Wait till I find the right people to help me, and the king

102 BEDTIME WONDER TALES

shall be made to give me the treasures of his whole kingdom.”

Then, full of wrath, he walked on till he entered a forest. There he came across a man who was uprooting trees as easily as if they were cornstalks. “Such a stout fellow would be a helper worth having,” our soldier thought, and he called to him, saying, “Friend, will you be my servant and travel with me?”

The man had pulled up a half dozen of the trees and now began tying them into a fagot. “Yes,” he replied, “but first I must carry this bit of wood home to my mother.”

He twisted one of the trees around the other five, lifted the huge fagot on his shoulders, and off he went with it. In a little while he returned to the soldier, who said, “We two will be a match for all the world.”

After they had journeyed on together for a while they came to a huntsman who was

down on one knee taking careful aim with his gun.

“Huntsman,” the soldier said, “tell me what you are going to shoot.”

The huntsman responded: “Two miles from here a fly is sitting on the bough of an oak tree. I intend that my bullet shall hit the fly’s head without injuring its body.”

“Well,” the soldier said, “shoot away. Then come along with me. We three will be a match for all the world.”

The huntsman was quite willing to do as the soldier wished, and after he had discharged his gun and hit the fly’s head, he and his new-found friends went on together. By and by they came to nine windmills whose sails were briskly whirling, although not a breath of wind was stirring.

“I can’t imagine what turns the sails of these windmills on such a quiet day as this,” the soldier said.

104 BEDTIME WONDER TALES

When he had gone on with his followers some distance farther he saw a man sitting in a tree with his cheeks puffed out, blowing.

“My good fellow, what are you doing up there?” the soldier asked.

“Did you notice nine windmills that you passed a little while ago?” the man responded. “I am blowing to make their sails go round. I can blow any kind of a wind. If you wish a zephyr I will breathe one that will delight your soul, or I can blow a squall so fierce as to be terrifying.”

“Seeing is believing,” the soldier remarked.

Thereupon the man breathed very gently, and what seemed to be a soft evening breeze bent the grasses and made the foliage flutter. Then, with a sudden change, he sent forth a wild blast that uprooted a row of oaks.

“Come with me!” the soldier cried. “We four will be a match for all the world.”

So the blower climbed down and went on with the other three. Presently they came to a man who was standing on one leg. He had taken off the other leg, and it was lying on the ground by his side.

"My friend," the soldier said, "why have you taken off the leg that I see there?"

"I am a runner," he answered. "I have taken off a leg to prevent myself from running too fast. When I run with both I go faster than a bird can fly. I was about to pick up my leg and start when you spoke."

"Come with me," the soldier said. "We five will be a match for all the world."

This suited the runner, and the five went on together. Soon they met a man wearing his hat tilted over one ear.

"Manners, my friend, manners!" the soldier cried. "Don't wear your hat like that. It makes you look like a simpleton. Put it on properly."

106 BEDTIME WONDER TALES

"I dare not put it straight," the man declared; "for if I did there would be such a terrible frost that the very birds flying through the air would freeze and fall dead to the ground."

"Come with me," the soldier said. "We six will be a match for all the world."

The man responded that he would rather walk in company than alone, and he joined the others.

They had not gone many miles when they came to a youth who was on his knees, bending over with one side of his head touching the ground.

"My lad," the soldier said, "what are you doing?"

"Listening," the youth replied. "When I put my ear to the ground I hear all that is passing near and far without stirring from the spot."

"If that be true, tell me what the people

at my home are saying now," the soldier ordered.

The lad put his ear to the ground and said: "An old man is talking to his wife. He says: 'Thank Heaven, that fool of a son of mine is out of my sight! I'm well rid of him. Perhaps he'll learn in the army to be a man instead of a good-for-nothing idiot.'"

"Stop, stop!" the soldier cried. "I believe you. There's no need to report more. Come along with me, for you have found the road to fortune."

"Well and good," the youth said, and the seven traveled along together.

XVII

A RACE

THE seven comrades went on till they came to the royal city. A proclamation had just been made that any man who should run a race with the king's daughter and be victorious might become her husband. But if he lost the race he must also lose his head.

The princess was very swift and never yet had found a person able to outrun her. Everybody said that any one who attempted a race with her would surely fail and his life be forfeited.

But the soldier at once asked to be allowed to compete. "However, I do not wish to run myself," he explained. "I have a servant who will run for me."

"Very well," the king said, "I care not a

fig; only in that case your servant and you both shall be beheaded if he loses the race.”

“I agree to your conditions,” the soldier responded, and it was arranged that the race should take place at once.

When the princess appeared, the soldier called his runner to him, and had him put on his other leg. “Now be as nimble as you can,” he said, “and don’t fail to win.”

The princess and the runner were each given a pitcher, and the one who could go to a spring, five miles distant, fill the pitcher with water, and get back first with it would be declared the victor. The trumpets sounded, and the two began to run at the same moment, but the princess, swift as she was, had hardly gone a dozen steps before the runner was out of sight, for his running was as if a sudden breeze swept by.

In a short time he reached the spring, filled his pitcher, and began the return jour-

ney. He was half way back when he thought: "Why should I be in such haste? I have run even faster than usual, and it has wearied me. I will stop and rest."

So he set down his pitcher and stretched himself out on the ground. He knew he had plenty of time and saw no harm in waiting till the princess appeared. But it was very quiet there, the sun shone warmly, and he fell asleep.

He still slept when the king's daughter came to where he was. She paused long enough to empty his pitcher and then hurried on. "If that nap of his continues long enough, I shall win," she said.

She arrived at the spring and was soon off again with her pitcher full of water. When she came to where she had seen the runner he had not yet awakened.

Now all would have gone wrong for the soldier had not Sharp Ears, by great good

fortune, put his head down to the ground to listen. "I hear only the footsteps of the princess," he said. "Something must have happened to our runner."

At once the huntsman hurriedly ascended one of the towers of the king's castle. From there he saw for miles as clearly as most people would see for as many feet.

"Oho!" he cried, "the runner sleeps, and unless he is aroused at once the day is lost. Well, the princess shall be no match for us if I can help it."

Then the huntsman loaded his gun and took careful aim at a stick of wood on which the runner was resting his head. So true was the huntsman's aim that he shot away the stick without harming the sleeper in the least.

Of course this served to awaken the runner, who jumped to his feet. He saw that his pitcher was empty and that the king's

112 BEDTIME WONDER TALES

daughter was far ahead of him. However, he did not lose courage. Without an instant's hesitation he returned swiftly to the spring, filled his pitcher, and was back at the castle just soon enough to defeat the princess. Then you should have heard the cries and the uproar, the whistling and clapping of hands, and all the people shouting, "Hurrah, long life to the stranger!"

XVIII

THE KING'S GOLD

THE king was vexed, and so was his daughter. They did not like the idea of her being the wife of a common soldier, and they discussed how they could rid themselves of him and his companions.

Presently the king said: "Daughter, trouble yourself no longer. I have thought of a way to be quit of these six rogues forever."

Then he had his servants prepare a delicious feast in a certain room. As soon as the feast was ready he went to the seven comrades, and said, "You must now eat, drink, and be merry."

He led the way to the apartment where

114 BEDTIME WONDER TALES

the table was spread. They entered it through an iron door, and found that it had an iron floor, walls, and ceiling and that the windows were grated with heavy iron bars. It seemed a queer sort of a room to them, yet they did not suspect that all was not right, for they were not much used to royal castles.

“Sit down and enjoy yourselves,” the king said, and immediately he stepped outside and had the door locked and bolted.

This done, he ordered his servants to make a big fire beneath the room so that the iron floor should be red hot. The fire was started, and the feasters soon began to feel the room growing very warm. They had no thought of the real reason for this, and the soldier remarked: “There has been a change in the weather. Open the door and windows that we may have a little air.”

But they discovered that the door and win-

dows were securely fastened, and then they guessed that the king intended to suffocate them.

“He shall not succeed, however,” the man who wore his hat tilted over one ear declared. “I will bring on a frost that will make the fire underneath us ashamed of itself.”

So he set his hat straight on his head, and immediately there came such a frost that the heat vanished, and the very food on the table began to freeze.

After an hour or two had passed and the king believed that all the seven men must have perished in the fearful heat, he caused the door to be opened. He looked in and saw the men seated around the table safe and sound. For a moment he gazed in astonishment at them. Then he slammed the door, turned to his servants, and asked angrily, “Why did not you build the fire as I commanded?”

116 BEDTIME WONDER TALES

“We did,” they replied. “Pray go down and see for yourself.”

The king went to look, and, sure enough an immense fire was burning underneath the iron room. Evidently the seven men had some way of protecting themselves from the heat that he knew not of, and he must contrive a different method to get rid of them. He thought about this for a while, and then sent for the soldier.

“If you will give up your claim to my daughter,” he said, “you can have as much gold as you can carry.”

“All right,” the soldier agreed, “but one of my servants will do the carrying instead of me. Let him have all the gold he can take away, and I shall be satisfied. Have it ready in two weeks time.”

The king left him, and the soldier called together all the tailors in the city, and asked them to make for him as large a sack as they

could complete in fourteen days. When it was finished the strong man whom the soldier had found in the forest rooting up trees took it on his shoulder and went to the king.

“Who is this big fellow with the great heap of bagging on his shoulder?” the king asked.

“He is the soldier’s servant come for the gold you promised,” the king’s chief counselor replied.

So the king ordered that a ton of gold should be fetched. Sixteen men were required to carry it, but the strong man took it up with one hand and tossed it into the sack, saying: “Why don’t you bring more at a time? This only fills one corner of the bag.”

Again and again the king sent the sixteen men back for gold, and when all his treasure had been brought, the sack was still only half full.

“Bring me more!” the strong man cried. “You agreed that I should have all I could carry.”

Then couriers were sent forth to collect all the gold there was in the kingdom. Even when that had been delivered, the bag was not quite full. “Never mind,” the strong man said, “I will not look too closely. I can tie the sack all the easier.”

As soon as he had tied it, he lifted it to his back, and walked off with his companions.

When the king saw all the wealth of his realm carried off by a single man, he flew into a great passion. “Have my cavalry summoned!” he shouted. “Let them pursue those fellows and take the sack away!”

The cavalry were soon galloping along the highroad. They overtook the soldier and his servants and called out: “Halt, you rascals! You are our prisoners! Put

down that sack of gold or we will cut you in pieces."

"What is it you are saying?" the blower asked. "Do you threaten us? I think I will help you to prance back to the king's castle. When you get there you can tell your master that if he sends any more horsemen after us I will blow them all into the air, and he will never see them alive again."

Then the blower puffed out his cheeks and blew such a wind as carried the cavalry before it head over heels back to the royal castle. They delivered their message to the king, who grumbled: "Well, let the fellows alone. After all they have some right on their side."

So the seven comrades got away with their treasure without further trouble. By and by they divided the gold and went to their homes, where they lived happily to the end of their days.

XIX

THE FAMINE

A WIDOW had two sons. The elder, Moi, had grown to manhood. The younger, Pao, was only a boy. Moi was a good man. He served his mother well and he sent Pao to school. He had worked hard for thirty years, but he had not gained riches.

One year there was a great drought in the country where the widow lived. The grain all withered and dried, and the people had so little to eat that many starved to death. It was a dreadful famine.

Moi killed his oxen and later his horses and mules to keep his mother and brother from starving. Each time that he killed some of his animals for meat, the neighbors would come and beg food. He was sorry for

them, and he could not refuse to help them in their distress.

One woman came many times until she was ashamed to beg longer. Finally she brought her little girl to him and said: "We are again starving. I will give you this girl for some meat. She is strong and can serve your mother."

"I will give you the meat," he said, "but I can not take your girl from you."

However, she insisted, and so he let her leave the girl.

Time went on until there came a day when all the food in Moi's house had been eaten. Moi and his mother and brother and the little girl were starving.

"We shall die," the widow declared.

"No," Moi said, "I think we shall not die. By tomorrow fortune may in some way favor us."

It was winter and the house was cold and

122 BEDTIME WONDER TALES

dark when they went to bed that night. There was no wood, no light, no food.

While Moi slept he dreamed that he saw an old man in flowing white garments, who had a belt around his waist fastened with a golden buckle. His hair was long and white, and his face was gentle and kind.

“Moi, Moi, Moi!” the old man called, “hearken to my words. Do you know how many people are dead from famine in this land?”

“I cannot tell,” Moi answered, “but I am well aware that they are many.”

Then the old man said: “In every home except yours some have died. Those of your household are all alive, and you have saved the little girl.

“You are a good man. For thirty years you have plowed the soil and never uttered a complaint. Whether there is drouth or flood, hurricane or earthquake, you continue

patient and humane. You take excellent care of your mother. You support your brother, send him to school, and are as a father to him. You have a sympathetic heart for your neighbors' troubles, and you live an upright life.

"Because of all this you shall not starve. Tomorrow morning you must rise early and go to the mountain ten miles from here on the borders of the wilderness. There you will find wheat and nuts and meat for you to bring home to your family. I am a spirit sent to your aid from heaven."

So saying, the white-robed old man went out of the room. When Moi awoke in the morning he got up with great joy and told his family what he had dreamed. Without delay he went to the mountain on the borders of the wilderness. There he found wheat and nuts and meat, and he took home all he could carry.

124 BEDTIME WONDER TALES

He made other journeys to the mountain from time to time while the famine lasted, and always returned laden with food. Thus he was able to feed his own family and to save the lives of many others.







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